United Nations A/C.4/57/SR.2

General Assembly
Fifty-seventh session
Official Records

Distr.: General
30 January 2003
English
Original: Russian

Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Summary record of the 2nd meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 30 September 2002, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Maitland (South Africa)
later: Mr. Al-Otaibi (Kuwait)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 19: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (Territories not covered under other agenda items) (A/57/23 (Part II) (chapters V, VI and IX-XI) and Add.1, A/57/23 (Part III) (chapters XIII, parts B and D-H) and A/57/206)

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Agenda item 12: Report of the Economic and Social Council (chapter VII, section D) (A/57/3* (chapter VII, part D); A/C.4/57/CRP.1*)

Agenda item 83: Offers by Member States of study and training facilities for inhabitants of Non-Self-Governing Territories (A/57/90 and Add.1)

1. **The Chairman** welcomed the accession to the United Nations of Timor-Leste, which had been on the Committee's agenda for many years as a Non-Self-Governing-Territory, and extended his best wishes to the State and its people. The Committee could rightly be proud of its work. He took it that the Committee wished to adopt the agenda for the current session.

2. *It was so decided.*

3. **The Chairman** said that, thanks to the tireless efforts of the United Nations, the world's population was now free from colonial rule. The Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples had made a significant contribution in that regard. The Special Committee had: dispatched missions to Non-Self-Governing Territories, closely analysed information transmitted under Article 73 *e* of the Charter of the United Nations, heard petitioners and undertaken other work in the interests of colonized peoples, thus enabling the people of Non-Self-Governing Territories to exercise their right to self-determination and, if such was their wish, to independence.

4. **Mr. Mekdad** (Syrian Arab Republic, Rapporteur of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples) introduced the report of the Special Committee on its work in 2002 (A/57/23). During the period under review, the Committee had continued to work within the framework of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, continuing to pay particular attention to the political, economic and social developments in Non-Self-Governing Territories. The participation in the work of the Committee of representatives from the Non-Self-Governing Territories, as well as non-governmental organizations and experts, had greatly facilitated that task. The report underlined the importance the Special Committee attached to cooperation with the administering Powers. The continuing cooperation with New Zealand was welcomed. The meetings of the Committee with the representatives of New Zealand and Tokelau, held in New York in 2001 and 2002 within the framework of the work programme for the decolonization of Tokelau, had been particularly fruitful. France had participated in the work of the Committee during its consideration of the question of New Caledonia. The delegations of the United Kingdom and the United States had continued informal consultations with the Committee. In 2003, the Special Committee intended to intensify the dialogue with the administering Powers for the purpose of discussing the initiation of the development of work programmes for specific Territories under their administration. In particular, the Committee still awaited the responses of the administering Powers of American Samoa and Pitcairn.

* To be issued.

5. In the absence of visiting missions to the Non-Self-Governing Territories that would have allowed the Special Committee to communicate directly with the people of the Territories, the Committee's regional seminars — conducted alternately in the Caribbean and the Pacific regions — provided an invaluable opportunity to obtain first-hand information on the situation in the Territories. In May 2002, a Pacific Regional Seminar had been held in Fiji (A/57/23 (Part I), chapter II, annex). The seminar had proved a success, with open and constructive discussions.

6. He drew attention to the recommendations of the Special Committee at its 2002 session (A/57/23 (Part III), chapter XIII). The report also reflected the consideration by the Committee of the questions of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas), Gibraltar and Western Sahara, as well as the Committee's decision of 21 July 2001 concerning Puerto Rico. Lastly, he was convinced that if all parties exercised positive political will and took a constructive approach, it would be possible to make further progress towards the eradication of colonialism. The Special Committee trusted that the Fourth Committee would positively consider the draft resolutions contained in the report of the Special Committee.

7. **Mr. Huntley** (Saint Lucia, Chairman of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples) said that in July 2002, he had addressed the Economic and Social Council, after which a resolution had been adopted on the implementation of the Declaration by the specialized agencies. The Pacific Regional Seminar, held in May 2002, had offered an opportunity for the Special Committee to hear about the particular needs of the Non-Self-Governing Territories and to inform seminar participants about its work. It was clear that the views of the Non-Self-Governing Territories must be fully taken into account in any future decolonization work programme. It had been repeatedly emphasized that in order for the Special Committee to carry out its mandate successfully, the cooperation of the administering Powers was required. During the Pacific Regional Seminar, he had told representatives of the Non-Self-Governing Territories that they should regard the Committee as a friend, but that that did not mean that the administering Powers should view it as a foe. On the contrary, they should see it as a partner that was ready to assist them in implementing the Organization's resolutions calling upon them to end the colonial status of the Non-Self-Governing Territories.

8. In 2002, the members of the Special Committee had been officially invited by the Government of New Zealand and the people of Tokelau to visit that Territory. He had acted as Chairman of the Mission to Samoa, Tokelau and New Zealand from 12 to 24 August. He urged other administering Powers to facilitate requests for visiting missions by the Special Committee as well, given that they were not leisure trips, but working visits. In the interests of expediting the work of the Fourth Committee, he suggested that it should consider the English version of the draft report of the mission to Tokelau (the official document in all six languages would be available by the end of October).

9. During the visit to Tokelau, the mission participants had spent one day on each of the three atolls. They had attended formal meetings with the Faipules (island representatives) and the Councils of Elders, heard from other residents of the atolls, and visited schools, hospitals and radio stations. They had also attended a special session of the General Fono (National Assembly) chaired by the "Ulu" (Head of Tokelau). In Samoa, the mission participants had met with the Prime Minister, as well as representatives of the United Nations system and of regional organizations in which Tokelau participated. In New Zealand, they had had extremely useful meetings with representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the New Zealand Agency for International Development, as well as members of the large Tokelauan community living in the Wellington area. They had also participated in a round table on the difficulties facing small island Territories.

10. Based on all that they had seen and heard, the mission participants were convinced that Tokelau and New Zealand enjoyed a positive and close relationship and were proceeding steadily towards greater self-government for the Territory. To overcome the problems faced by the Territories, Tokelauans counted on the support of the administering Power. The mission participants believed that the forthcoming meeting between Tokelau and New Zealand, scheduled for November 2002, would be crucial to clarifying pending issues such as economic and administrative assistance to the Territory, security and defence issues, participation in regional and international affairs and

the decolonization process. In that connection, it was necessary to ensure that Tokelauans were better informed about the options for self-determination (independence, free association or integration). In that respect, it was recommended that Tokelau and New Zealand should consider developing educational programmes on the matter, and that a study of the options and of their implications for the territory should be conducted under United Nations auspices.

11. The mission participants expressed their appreciation to the representatives of the Territory and the administering Power. They hoped that such an example of constructive cooperation would encourage other administering Powers to become more involved in the work of the Special Committee. In that connection, it was imperative that any decolonization exercise should include the representatives of the Territory at every step. The Special Committee was determined to make a difference in assisting the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories to exercise their right to self-determination. However, yearly resolutions and participation in seminars would not suffice. The Special Committee must play an active role in promoting the process of decolonization through individual Territory work programmes and other measures applied to all Territories. The administering Powers and other interested parties should not view such a role as interference on the part of the Committee. In concluding, he wished to urge Fourth Committee members to give positive consideration to the recommendations submitted to the General Assembly by the Special Committee.

12. **The Chairman** noted the previous speaker's request that the report on the mission to Tokelau should be considered in the form of a conference paper, on the understanding that the official version of the report would be issued at a later date. He took it that the Committee wished to approve the request.

13. *It was so decided.*

14. **Mr. Ononye** (Nigeria) said that the granting of independence to Non-Self-Governing Territories remained a major challenge for the international community. The United Nations must devise ways of ensuring the timely attainment of such independence. In that connection, his delegation called on the administering Powers to be more sensitive to the legitimate aspirations of peoples still under colonial rule. It was strongly committed to the implementation of General Assembly resolution 56/67 and supported all measures taken by the Organization to ensure that Non-Self-Governing Territories gained independence without delay. With regard to Western Sahara, his delegation reaffirmed its support for the referendum process being conducted under the auspices of the United Nations and the African Union. It considered that the Settlement Plan proposed by the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity, which formed the basis for Nigeria's participation in the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), constituted the only guarantee for the people of Western Sahara to attain their right to self-determination. It therefore also supported Security Council resolution 1429 (2002) and welcomed the various measures taken by the United Nations to enhance the social and economic status of the peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories, to disseminate information on decolonization and to award scholarships to citizens of such Territories to acquire education.

15. **Mr. Nacerodien** (South Africa) said that his delegation welcomed the Special Committee's report and commended it for its work in 2002. One of the most significant events of the current session had been the accession of Timor-Leste to membership of the United Nations. The international community and the Organization had played a crucial role in the process of ensuring that the country had become a sovereign State. Unfortunately, the session was also overshadowed by the situation in the Middle East, where the bloody conflict continued. The international community must recognize that it bore more than a moral obligation towards the innocent victims of the violence. His delegation called for the full implementation of the relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, including the realization of the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and an end to foreign occupation.

16. At the same time, his delegation remained deeply concerned over the continued delay in the full implementation of the agreements reached between the interested parties on Western Sahara. Despite the efforts of the international community and the repeated appeals of the General Assembly, the decolonization of the last Non-Self-Governing Territory in Africa was still to be achieved. Although the process had not been easy, steady progress had been made, most notably in completing the identification process of eligible voters

for the referendum. In that connection, his delegation commended the commitment of the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy, Mr. James Baker, to resolving the causes for the delay in implementing the Settlement Plan. It was high time that the referendum, for which MINURSO had made such thorough preparations, was held. His delegation called on the parties to continue their efforts to overcome remaining obstacles to the holding of the referendum and to remain committed to their agreement to afford the Saharan people an opportunity to express their wishes in a free and fair process in the near future. The Settlement Plan was still the arrangement approved by both parties and the international community as a whole as being the proper basis for a fair and lasting solution to the conflict in Western Sahara.

17. His delegation called on all Member States to give active support to the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, which had just commenced, and expressed the hope that, at the current session, all delegations would recommit themselves with vigour to the aim of hastening the complete elimination of colonialism in all its forms and manifestations, as provided for in the Plan of Action of the previous Decade. South Africa remained fully committed to the fulfilment of the ideals of self-determination and independence through the Fourth Committee.

18. **Mr. Kabtani** (Tunisia) welcomed the Organization's achievements in implementing the provisions of General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV), which contained the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. Its most outstanding success had been the attainment of national sovereignty over the past years by more than 100 countries in the world. At the same time, despite the progress achieved over the past decade, much remained to be done, while successes already attained should be underpinned by further progress, on which every endeavour must be made to achieve consensus. In order to achieve the complete success of the decolonization process, it would be essential to strengthen cooperation still more between the Fourth Committee and the Special Committee. In that connection, the latter's most important task was to ascertain the true aspirations of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories. It should make every effort to raise awareness among the people of such Territories of their rights and of the possible varieties of decolonization. The decolonization process must be given a new impetus, and he hoped that the international community would redouble its efforts and show its commitment to the task of meeting the challenges facing the Committee at the beginning of the new millennium.

19. **Mr. Musambachime** (Zambia) said that his Government had always strongly supported the process of decolonization and the implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. Its support for the liberation struggle in southern Africa, for which Zambia had paid with the loss of Zambian lives and with economic hardship, was well documented. The Government believed in the triumph of the principle of the inalienable right to self-determination and independence of all nations and peoples. Much, however, remained to be done in order to achieve that goal. The successes achieved by the United Nations and the whole international community in Timor-Leste had been overshadowed by the failures in Western Sahara, and his delegation could not but register its disappointment with the lack of progress in solving that long-standing problem.

20. The question of Western Sahara was still a decolonization issue falling under General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV). Since 1965, the General Assembly had consistently called, in its resolutions, for the decolonization of Western Sahara and reaffirmed the inalienable rights of the Saharan people to self-determination and independence. His delegation remained convinced that the United Nations Settlement Plan was the only framework that would allow the Saharan people to exercise those rights. Efforts to ensure the holding of the free and fair referendum envisaged under the Settlement Plan should therefore continue. The Saharan people must be allowed to choose freely between independence and incorporation. The right to choose, given by the United Nations and the international community to the people of Timor-Leste, should be equally extended to the Saharan people.

21. *Mr. Al-Otaibi (Kuwait), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.*

22. **Mr. Gatilov** (Russian Federation) said that one of the priorities of the United Nations should be to make the work of the Special Committee more effective. In that connection, his delegation would advocate tackling

the issue from three different angles. The main guarantee of success lay in focusing on specific goals, inter alia, by developing individual programmes for Non-Self-Governing Territories. Secondly, the United Nations must strengthen its non-confrontational and pragmatic approach to its activities in the field of decolonization as a whole, thereby creating an environment that would enable the specific goals to be achieved. Lastly, it would be important to set up a systematic, constructive dialogue between the Special Committee and the administering Powers. The effective realization of the rights of the peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories to self-determination and independence could come about only if full account was taken of the objective realities of their political, social and economic development, the freedom to choose among the full range of forms of self-determination, and full respect for human rights.

23. **Mr. Requeijo Gual** (Cuba) said that the decolonization process was one of the Organization's most outstanding achievements, and had its successes and failures. In recent years, unfortunately, the achievements had been insignificant, and the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories remained practically unchanged. For many years, visits to such Territories had not been included in the Committee's programme, in spite of the crucial importance of obtaining direct information about living conditions and the economic, political and social position of their peoples, many of whom knew nothing of the various forms of self-government to which they were entitled. His delegation commended the visits by the members of the Committee to Tokelau. It was also appreciative of the position adopted by New Zealand, which had not only made the visit possible but had established an open dialogue based on mutual respect on various issues.

24. His delegation considered that the United Nations should continue to direct its efforts to achieving a situation in which the decolonization issue figured largely in its day-to-day activities. Regional seminars on decolonization should continue to be held. At the same time, information should be disseminated not only through the United Nations web site on decolonization but by the appropriate use of the mass media in the States Members of the United Nations. Support should be given to the holding of academic discussions.

25. The international community should give the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories the widest possible opportunities for scholarships and occupational training. His delegation welcomed the adoption of a number of resolutions and recognized the inalienable right of the Puerto Rican people to self-determination and independence, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV). At the same time, it was deeply concerned by the passive attitude adopted to the settlement of the situation in Western Sahara, which hindered the establishment of a lasting peace in the region. His delegation reiterated its strong support for the legal right of Argentina in the dispute over the sovereignty of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas) and called for the establishment of dialogue and cooperation between the parties, in the interests of finding a fair, peaceful and decent resolution of the issue. It also called on the administering Power of Guam to cooperate fully with the United Nations, to respect the inalienable rights of the peoples of that Territory and to act in their true interests.

26. **Mr. Moura** (Brazil), speaking on behalf of the States members of the Common Market of the Southern Cone (MERCOSUR) and the associated countries Bolivia and Chile, said that he supported the consultation and negotiation process for settling colonial issues between States concerned. The administering Powers must cooperate fully under Article 73 *e* of the Charter and transmit the relevant information concerning the Territories under their administration. The independence of East Timor represented a significant achievement for the Special Committee of 24 and the United Nations in the process of decolonization. East Timor's political transition to a modern, democratic State owed much to the unconditional support of the international community and the maturity of its political leaders. The small island Territories of the Caribbean and the Pacific accounted for the majority of remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories, and special attention should be paid to their situations. Measures must be taken to guarantee their sustainable economic development and to protect against such phenomena as natural disasters, drug-trafficking and money-laundering.

27. He welcomed the positive developments in Gibraltar, Tokelau and New Caledonia. Initiatives such as the Pacific Regional Seminar held at Nadi, Fiji, were important not only to assess the current situation in Non-Self-Governing Territories, but also to encourage the international community to participate in the decolonization process and facilitate the Territories'

political and social development. States members of MERCOSUR, and the associated countries Bolivia and Chile, were keen to see a resolution of the dispute between Argentina and the United Kingdom over the sovereignty of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas), South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands.

28. **Mr. Stagno** (Costa Rica), speaking on behalf of the Rio Group, said that the Group wished to reiterate its strong support for the decolonization process. In the 40 years since the adoption of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, the United Nations had contributed significantly to eradicating colonialism. The granting of independence to the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste in May 2002 owed much to the dedication of the United Nations to the decolonization process. The decolonization of East Timor was a sterling example of the role the United Nations should play in such processes. The international community should continue to provide assistance to newly independent countries. The fact that there were still 16 Non-Self-Governing Territories demonstrated that the process of decolonization had yet to be completed. The Committee's mandate would only be fulfilled when all the Non-Self-Governing Territories included on the list were decolonized in accordance with relevant United Nations resolutions. The primary goal of the process was not to "remove" the Territories' names from the list, but to implement fully and without reservations the principles embodied in the Charter of the United Nations, the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples and other relevant General Assembly resolutions.

29. The Rio Group believed that Argentina and the United Kingdom should resume negotiations with a view to swiftly agreeing a peaceful, just and durable settlement to their sovereignty dispute over the Falkland Islands (Malvinas), South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands. Regarding the small island Territories in the Caribbean and the Pacific, which accounted for the majority of Non-Self-Governing Territories, the Rio Group believed that it was vital to continue adopting measures to promote their sustainable and balanced economic growth and to ensure that their decolonization process was successfully concluded in accordance with the wishes of their populations. The international community should help resolve the complex political, economic, social and environmental problems facing those Territories. The Rio Group wished to reiterate the need for a durable and mutually acceptable solution guaranteeing the right to self-determination of the Saharan people. The Rio Group wished to reiterate its appeal to all countries to engage in constructive cooperation towards the eradication of colonialism in all its forms and manifestations.

30. **Mr. Fadaifard** (Islamic Republic of Iran) expressed the hope that East Timor's independence would also open the road to peoples of other Non-Self-Governing Territories to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination in the near future. His delegation believed that the United Nations should intensify its efforts to ensure full implementation of the plan of action of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism and to identify practical approaches in the search for solutions for the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories. The Special Committee on decolonization should continue to play its major role in developing individual programmes for the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories.

31. Respecting the views of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories regarding their rights to self-determination and strengthening and improving cooperation with the administering Powers with a view to developing work programmes for the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories were the most significant factors in the current decolonization process. The participation of the representative of the United Kingdom at the Regional Seminars in Havana and Nadi had been a positive sign. Moreover, dissemination of relevant information among the peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories regarding their right to self-determination would represent a significant step towards decolonization. There was also a need for additional information to be submitted to the United Nations under Article 73 *e*. The dispatch of visiting missions was a further important factor in the decolonization process, since such visits made it possible to assess the situation in the Non-Self-Governing Territories and to identify new approaches to fulfilling mandates. In that connection, he wished to thank the Government of New Zealand for its exemplary cooperation with the Special Committee on decolonization that had fully facilitated the United Nations Mission to Tokelau in August 2002.

32. Military installations and activities of the administering Powers in Non-Self-Governing Territories that ran contrary to the rights and interests

of the peoples concerned, and the impact of military activities on the environment, economic development and the health of the population, were a cause for concern. The Islamic Republic of Iran was a long-standing supporter of the work of the United Nations in the field of decolonization, and as a member of the Special Committee on decolonization, and was determined to continue to fulfil its responsibilities in those regards.

33. **Ms. Randrianarivony** (Madagascar) said that the United Nations continued to solve the problems of decolonization, as an integral part of its values and principles embodied in the Millennium Declaration. Numerous States Members of the United Nations had achieved independence following the adoption in 1960 of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) of 14 December 1960) and the establishment in 1961 of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. In that context, Madagascar welcomed East Timor's declaration of independence on 22 May 2002, recognizing the tireless efforts of the Timorese people in their fight for independence. It also welcomed that country's entry into membership of the United Nations.

34. She wished to pay tribute to the Special Committee, the United Nations most reliable ally in the decolonization process, for its efforts to achieve a constructive dialogue among administering Powers, including through the organization of an annual Regional Seminar, most recently held in Nadi, Fiji, in May 2002, to examine the issue of follow-up to the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. The right to self-determination was a fundamental right of which no people should be deprived. Although significant progress had been made, some Territories had yet to exercise their inalienable right to self-dete....nation. Madagascar welcomed all initiatives that increased economic assistance to Non-Self-Governing Territories, especially to small island Territories, in view of their vulnerable situation.

35. Lastly, she expressed the hope that the 16 Non-Self-Governing Territories would soon acquire national sovereignty in accordance with the relevant resolution on the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism and the Millennium Declaration, in which world leaders had reaffirmed their will to make concerted efforts to achieve the sovereign equality of all States, to ensure respect for their territorial integrity and political independence and the exercise of the right to self-determination of peoples still under colonial rule or foreign occupation.

36. **Ms. Falzarano** (United Kingdom), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that she wished to respond to remarks made by the representatives of Brazil, Costa Rica and Cuba concerning the sovereignty of the Falkland Islands. The position of the United Kingdom was well known and had last been set out in detail by her Government in a right of reply to a statement made by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Argentina during the general debate on 17 September 2002.

Requests for hearings

37. **The Chairman** said that he had received 18 requests for hearings on the questions of Gibraltar and Western Sahara (agenda item 19). He took it that the Committee wished to circulate those requests and to hear their authors at subsequent meetings.

38. *It was so decided.*

39. **The Chairman** said that that he had received requests from the Chief Minister of Gibraltar and a representative of the Government of the United States Virgin Islands to make statements on Gibraltar and the small Territories.

The meeting rose at 4.50 p.m.